

# Guidance for High School Seniors

The South Carolina Commission on Higher Education understands that these are unprecedented times for our high school seniors, families, and public and independent high schools, charter schools, and home school associations.

The South Carolina Department of Education (SC DOE) has issued guidelines for public high schools with regards to grading and the end of the academic year. The scholarships will be awarded based on the students' final high school GPA and class ranking at the end of the school year, as directed by the SC DOE. A link to the guidelines on grade reporting, issued by the SC DOE for 2019-20 on March 30, 2020, can be found here: <https://ed.sc.gov/newsroom/school-district-memoranda-archive/covid-19-grade-reporting-guidance/covid-19-grade-reporting-guidance-memo/>.

## Palmetto Fellows Scholarship:

### Initial Eligibility Requirements

The eligibility requirements will not change for 2019-2020. Students are eligible to apply if they meet one of the following sets of academic requirements:

1. Score at least 1200 on the SAT (27 on the ACT), earn a minimum 3.50 cumulative GPA on the SC Uniform Grading Policy (SC UGP) at the end of junior year, and rank in the top six percent of the class at the end of either the sophomore or the junior year;

OR

2. Score at least 1400 on the SAT (32 on the ACT), earn a minimum 4.00 cumulative GPA on the SC UGP at the end of the junior year or senior year.

Public and independent high schools, charter schools and home school association school counselors will be reaching out to Seniors to determine if they meet the eligibility requirements for the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship. The Early award period closes on April 15, 2020. Applications postmarked on or before April 15, 2020 will be accepted. The next opportunity awarding period opens May 15<sup>th</sup> and closes June 30, 2020.

### Frequently Asked Questions:

**Due to ACT's April test cancellation and SAT's May test cancellation, my child has been unable to improve their test score to meet the eligibility requirements for the Palmetto Fellows. Will CHE make an allowance for these disruptions?**

During the 2019-20 academic year there have been nine test opportunities combined between the SAT College Board and ACT. Both tests are currently scheduled to be administered in June 2020. Students participating in the June tests should notify their school counselor, so their Palmetto Fellows Scholarship application can be submitted during the Late Award period as

Pending. Students should send their test scores directly to CHE (SAT code is 4313 and ACT code is 6326). Applications will be processed once June test scores are received.

**With the COVID-19 disruptions to the regular learning schedule, my child may not perform as well in an online learning environment. If this affects their GPA and/or rank, they may not meet the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship eligibility requirements. Will CHE reduce the eligibility requirements for Palmetto Fellows?**

The Palmetto Fellows Scholarship eligibility requirements are statutorily mandated. S.C. Commission on Higher Education administers each scholarship program according to the legislation so that funding is distributed fairly and equitably to all eligible South Carolina students. Students have opportunities to meet the eligibility requirements to apply for the Palmetto Fellow Scholarship or they may be eligible to be considered for the other SC state scholarships, such as the LIFE scholarship or the SC HOPE.

**I received a Palmetto Fellows confirmation email previously and it stated I would receive another email Mid-March. I haven't received the Palmetto Fellows email yet with the Designation Form. When can I expect an email?**

Students should be monitoring their Spam/Junk email folders. Palmetto Fellows notification emails are sent in batches and therefore can get pushed into Spam folders. Student notifications emails are being sent as we are processing paper application packets.

**My School Counselor has been collecting documents all year to submit Palmetto Fellows applications before the April 15<sup>th</sup> Early Awarding Period deadline. Now that school is closed indefinitely, will there be a postponement to the deadline and alternative submission methods?**

The Palmetto Fellows Scholarship Early Awarding Period deadline will remain April 15, 2020. If a counselor is unable to submit applications by this deadline, they can submit the student's application during the Late Award Period which opens May 15<sup>th</sup> and closes June 30, 2020. Due to F.E.R.P.A. privacy regulations, Palmetto Fellows application packets need to be mailed to the S.C. Commission on Higher Education.

## **LIFE and SC HOPE Scholarships:**

### **Initial Eligibility Requirements:**

The initial eligibility requirements will not change for 2019-20. Upon high school graduation, S.C resident students will be required to have two (2) of the following:

#### **S.C. HOPE Scholarship (4-year institutions only)**

- a) Earn at least a 3.0 final high school GPA based on the SC Uniform Grading Policy

#### **LIFE Scholarship (2-year institution)**

- a) Earn at least a 3.0 final high school GPA based on the SC Uniform Grading Policy

### **LIFE Scholarship (4-year institution)**

- a) Earn at least a 3.0 final high school GPA based on the SC Uniform Grading Policy
- b) Score a minimum of 1100 on the SAT or 24 on the ACT by the June test administration of the Senior year in high school; or
- c) Rank in the top 30% of the graduating high school class (if applicable).

The South Carolina Department of Education has issued guidelines for public high schools with regards to grading and the end of the academic year. The scholarships will be awarded based on the students' final high school GPA and class ranking at the end of the school year, as directed by the SC DOE. A link to the guidelines on grade reporting, issued by the SC DOE for 2019-20 on March 30, 2020, can be found here: <https://ed.sc.gov/newsroom/school-district-memoranda-archive/covid-19-grade-reporting-guidance/covid-19-grade-reporting-guidance-memo/>.

### **SC Need-based Grant:**

#### **Initial Eligibility Requirements:**

The initial eligibility requirements will not change for 2019-20. Upon high school graduation, S.C resident students will be required to meet the following:

- a) Be a needy student as defined by Title IV Federal Student Aid Programs for determining eligibility for federal student financial aid. The student must complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form;
- b) Be a U.S. citizen or a legal permanent resident who meets the definition of an eligible non-citizen under State residency statutes;
- c) Be a legal resident of South Carolina as defined in applicable State statutes governing the determination of residency for tuition and fee purposes;
- d) Be enrolled at the time of the grant disbursement in a minimum of twelve credit hours if full-time or six credit hours if part-time for the term at an eligible public institution;
- e) Have not been convicted of any felonies or been convicted of any second or subsequent alcohol or drug-related misdemeanor offenses within the past academic year by submitting a signed affidavit to the financial aid office at the institution at which the student is enrolled;
- f) Does not owe a refund or repayment on a State Grant, Pell Grant, or a Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant and not be in default on a loan under the Federal Perkins Loan or Federal Stafford Loan program; and
- g) Complete any other documentation required by the financial aid office at the institution at which the student is enrolled.

## **S.C. Lottery Tuition Assistance Grant (2-year institution)**

### **Initial Eligibility Requirements:**

- a) Be a S.C. resident attending an eligible 2-year institution in South Carolina
- b) Enroll as a degree seeking student in at least six credit hours of instruction at an eligible institution
- c) Complete a FAFSA or FAFSA waiver.

## **Frequently Asked Questions for High School Seniors**

### **LIFE and SC HOPE Scholarships**

#### **Topic: Final high school GPA's needed for initial eligibility**

**Guidance:** No changes have been made to the initial eligibility criteria for the SC HOPE or LIFE Scholarships. A student must earn at least a 3.0 final high school GPA for both awards. The South Carolina Department of Education has issued guidelines for public high schools with regards to grading and the end of the academic year. The scholarships will be awarded based on the students' final high school GPA and class ranking at the end of the school year, as directed by the SC DOE. A link to the guidelines on grade reporting, issued by the SC DOE for 2019-20 on March 30, 2020, can be found here: <https://ed.sc.gov/newsroom/school-district-memoranda-archive/covid-19-grade-reporting-guidance/covid-19-grade-reporting-guidance-memo/>. Though the memo addresses public schools, CHE would ask that all independent schools, charter schools, home schools and home school associations adhere to the same guidelines with regards to the required dates for reporting. This ensures that all students are held to the same standard.

#### **Topic: Remaining SAT and ACT Testing Dates for 2020**

**Guidance:** Both the ACT and SAT were able to offer the tests in August, September, October, November, December, February and March. While CHE staff does understand that both SAT and ACT have cancelled their April and May test administrations, both testing companies are still planning to offer the scheduled June test administrations, at this point. The regulations for the scholarship programs do allow for students to use the June test administration of the Senior year, even in those cases where the student graduates in May. Students will still have the opportunity to obtain a qualifying score by that test. It is worth pointing out that the cancellation of the May test administrations will impact all students in South Carolina. During the 2019-2020 academic year, there have been nine test opportunities combined between the SAT College Board and ACT. This means that every student will have the same amount of opportunities to achieve the qualifying score in the Senior year. This at least ensures that all students are given the same number of opportunities to achieve the needed score in the Senior year.

## **Topic: Super scoring the SAT and ACT Testing Dates for 2020**

**Guidance:** The qualifying SAT score for the LIFE (1100) and Palmetto Fellows Scholarships (1200 or 1400) can be achieved by super scoring, or combining the highest evidenced-based reading and evidenced-based math scores from any test sitting through the June test administration of the Senior year in high school. With regards to the ACT, this test will begin offering their first opportunity to super score this coming fall. CHE staff was able to reach out to ACT staff to confirm the start date of the ACT super scoring option. According to ACT staff, the super scoring option will be available beginning in September 2020. The option to super score would not be available at this point based on ACT's development schedule and current regulations.

## **Topic: Is there an application for the LIFE or SC HOPE Scholarships?**

**Guidance:** There is no application for the LIFE or SC HOPE Scholarships. If the college or university the student is attending determines that the criteria for the award have been met (GPA, class ranking, ACT/SAT, residency, etc.), they will automatically award the student the scholarship. However, it is never a bad idea to reach out to the financial aid office at the college to inquire on award timing, amount and procedures.

## **SC Need-based Grants**

### **Topic: How do I get awarded a S.C. Need-based Grant?**

**Guidance:** Students should be sure they have completed the Federal Application for Free Student Aid (FAFSA). Students will then need to contact the financial aid office of the institution they are attending to have eligibility determined.

## **Lottery Tuition Assistance Program**

### **Topic: Dual enrollment grades**

**Guidance:** A student will receive dual enrollments grades from both the high school and the higher education institution. The grading scale for dual enrollment coursework is established in an agreement between the high school and college through which the course is attempted. It is important that students contact the school counseling office at their high school, and the academic program office at their higher education institution to determine what changes, if any, have been made to the grading scale for 2019- 2020.

## **General S.C. State Scholarship Questions**

### **I plan to enroll part-time this year – how will my plans impact my scholarship eligibility?**

It will be important to check the eligibility requirements for state and institutional scholarships and grants as some may require students to attend full time. For example, the Palmetto Fellows, LIFE, SC HOPE and SC Tuition Grants require students to attend full time. Other state grants

such as SC Need-based Grants or Lottery Tuition Assistance at our two-year institutions permit students to attend part-time and still receive funds. Also, there may be opportunities to work on campus through college work study. It is important to check with the admissions office and the financial aid office at your college or university, if planning to attend part time so that both offices can provide guidance.

### **Topic: Can I take college classes this summer after I graduate?**

**Guidance:** The regulations for each of the scholarship programs (Palmetto Fellows, LIFE, SC HOPE) determine that each student is allotted a maximum of 8 terms of eligibility for an approved 4-year degree program and a maximum of 10 terms of eligibility for an approved 5-year degree program at an eligible institution. By regulations, these terms of eligibility do not begin until the student enrolls at an accredited institution during the first Fall or Spring term following high school graduation (for up to one year for Palmetto Fellows Scholarship recipients). Students can enroll and complete coursework during the Summer term immediately following high school graduation and maintain all allotted terms of eligibility. If Summer 2020 is the term immediately following high school graduation, you will be unable to receive scholarship funding for the coursework, not will use a term of your allotted eligibility.

### **Topic: Can I take a GAP Year after high school graduation?**

**Guidance:** The regulations for the LIFE and SC HOPE Scholarships determine that the terms of eligibility do not begin until the student enrolls at an accredited institution during the first Fall or Spring term following high school graduation. Students can delay their entry into college indefinitely and can still maintain their eligibility as long as they 1) do not earn college credit during this time period; 2) the student's parents or guardians must maintain their S.C residency during this time period; and 3) the student must be eligible upon enrollment. Should the criteria for the awards change the student's time period off, there is no guarantee that they would remain eligible.

The regulations for the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship determine that the terms of eligibility do not begin until the student enrolls at an accredited institution during the first Fall or Spring term following high school graduation. Students can delay their entry into college for up to one year, and can still maintain their eligibility as long as they 1) do not earn college credit during this time period; 2) the student's parents or guardians must maintain their S.C residency during this time period; and 3) the student must be eligible upon enrollment. Should the criteria for the awards change the student's time period off, there is no guarantee that they would remain eligible.

### **My first-choice school may no longer be affordable – what other options do I have?**

Seniors should first contact the financial aid office at their first-choice college and share their concerns about affordability. The office may provide options that were not available a few weeks ago. If the first-choice college remains unaffordable, seniors should look at other institutions especially in South Carolina. In state tuition at the public colleges and universities is typically lower than out of state colleges and universities. Independent colleges and universities also offer

tuition discounts. All of the S.C. public and independent college and universities offer state and institutional scholarships and grants. Please remember that May 1<sup>st</sup> is the deadline for admissions although some institutional admissions deadlines may be flexible.

### **Will I be able to take my AP Exams this year?**

The College Board is moving AP exams to an online format for 2020 to preserve the opportunity for students to benefit from the hard work they have put in this year. College Board has been diligent to ensure the following: test accommodations, content rigor, technology support, test security, and commitment to providing students have the opportunity to earn college credit.

Full information for students can be found here:

<https://apcoronavirusupdates.collegeboard.org/students>

### **Financial Aid Planning**

Seniors are still encouraged to complete financial aid applications, including the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The FAFSA remains the foundation of financial assistance for most students and other state and federal financial aid. Also, seniors should contact the financial aid office at the college or university they plan to attend. The office can provide guidance about completion of the FAFSA and provide information about other additional aid, including departmental or institutional scholarships.